MARVEL TIMES

75¢ NO. 1

BARRY SMITH: MARVEL'S WORST

KA-ZAR vs TARZAN

FACE FRONT!

We want to hear from you. This is your magazine. This is not an empty statement, we mean it. We want to hear your comment and opinions (pro and con) not only on MARVEL TIMES but on any aspect of Marvel comics. Send your letters to: MARVEL TIMES, "Face Front", 9875 SW 212 St., Miami, Fla. 33157.

EDITORIAL

Why should the SFCA publish a Marvel fanzine? To this we answer, why not ? While some may dispute this, the fact remains that about 75% of the new collectors that come into comic fandom come from the ranks of Marvel fans, and many of the older collectors around cut their teeth on Marvel, too, whether they want to admit it or not. For the most part, MARVEL TIMES will cater almost exclusively to the newer collectors and any of the more advanced collectors who can dig it. We hear, from time to time, a hue and cry for a good "fan"--zine. And this is what MT will be. This doesn't mean we intend to publish "just any old thing" (Art and articles), but by the same token, you will not see any 4-color covers by Wrightson or Newton, nor will you see a $5 price tag on MT. We make no apologies, MT will lean heavily toward the Marvel point of view, though we will print articles, from time to time, that take the opposite point of view. So, if you are not a "frantic follower" don't bother buying MT, you won't dig it. We are planning on a bi-monthly schedule but we can go monthly if the demand is there. If some generous soul wants to donate about $500.00 we may even advertise MT in Marvel Comics. "Face Front" will be our letter column, but unlike many other zines, it will be a major section of our fanzine instead of just a filler. We are prepared to give our letter column as much space as fans want. So, get busy on those letters. All contributions (art, articles, or what-have-you) are welcome, but you must send sufficient return postage if you want your material returned. Incidently, our cover is an interpertation by Jim Jones of what Flash Gordon would have looked like had he been published by Marvel with Kirby doing the art.

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REIGN OF WIZARDRY

BY MARK BURBEY

Sword and Sorcery, which happens to be my favorite medium of story telling, has become very prevalent in today's comics. Many say that this is due to the trend toward S&S in literature which began with Lancer Books' extremely successful reprints of Robert E. Howard's Conan. Not so. Sword & Sorcery was already present in comics as far back as the late fifties. This was mostly in the Viking Prince stories by Joe Kubert which appeared in BRAVE & THE BOLD #1-24. Sword & Sorcery was not a decisive factor in these stories though, but fantasy and mythology was used in large and small degrees throughout them. In this case S&S was used primarily as a plot device, rather than being the actual nucleus of the series.

The first regular usage of true S&S was in JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY in the "Tales Of Asgard" series. The basic premise in all of these stories was fantasy and mythology. Each of the stories told of various warriors who fought either Trolls, demons, wizards or other S&S manifestations. This series continued for several years as a back-up strip in THOR, and always maintained a fantasy flavor. The series began by chronicling the birth of the Norse gods as well as of mortal man himself. Other early ones dealt with Odin's battles with Ymir, the frost giant and Surtur, the fire demon, as well as with the boyhood of Thor in Asgard. As the series developed it virtually became another Thor strip, except the setting was always Asgard and there became regular supporting characters from the ranks of Asgardians who fought along Thor's side in various mystical battles. The main supporting characters with developed in this strip were Hogun the grim, Fandral of the flashing sword, and the voluminous Volstagg. When the "Tales Of Asgard" series was dropped, the loss was not as great as it could have been. This is due to the fact that the Thor strip had shifted almost entirely to the Asgardian locale. The stories were also exactly like those which had filled the pages of "Tales Of Asgard" except that they became of even grander scale due to the more pages there were to work with, twenty compared with the previous five. It was insured that the shimmering fantasy was to remain in Thor as it became increasingly rare for him to return to Earth.

Even though Marvel had done a lot with their "Tales Of Asgard" series, they were slow to expand this type of story into their other books. Even though the Conan paperbacks were enjoying tremendous sales, Marvel still appeared to be hesitant to test the market with the Conan type S&S. But then this could be easily understood since five years ago super-heroes were still flying high.

Thus James Warren, who was publishing magazines that were non-superhero oriented, began testing the appeal of this type of story. Although Warren published some extremely fine S&S tales, they were few and often far apart since he usually stuck to his

TOO LONG HAVE I TARRIED HERE! I HAVE MATTERS OF GREATER MOMENT TO OVERSEE!
BUT, IF BATTLE BE TO YOUR LIKING, FIND YE THE MYSTIC MOUNTAIN, AND 'TIS THERE THY DOOM AWAITS THEE!
THOR!! HURL NOT THY HAMMER! NONE BUT HOGUN MUST BRING HIM TO HIS KNEES! THE CAUSE IS MINE!
MOGUL HAS EVER BEEN SERVED BY HIS GIANT JINN! SLAVE--THE LAST OF A SPECIES WHOSE ORIGIN IS UNKNOWN, BUT WHO POSSESSES POWERS WHICH DEFY THE IMAGINATION!
'TWAS MOGUL WHO ENSLAVED MY PEOPLE--WHO HOLDS THEM STILL IN BONDAGE! 'TWAS HE WHO DROVE ME FROM MY LAND!
AND, THOUGH I SEARCHED LO, THESE MANY YEARS, I COULD NE'ER FIND THE MYSTIC MOUNTAIN ON WHICH HE DWELLS!
FASTER, MY INVINCIBLE SLAVE--FASTER! ONCE WE REACH THE MYSTIC MOUNTAIN, THEN MOGUL IS TRULY MASTER OF ALL!
NOT EVEN THE AWESOME MIGHT OF ASGARD ASSEMBLED CAN STAND AGAINST ME!

These are two consecutive panels from "Tales Of Asgard" in THOR #137

successful horror format.

But when Warren did print S&S tales, they were always of the highest quality. In CREEPY #2: "Ogre's Castle" by Archie Goodwin and Angelo Torres is a very good example of what I mean. Even though this is a typical "Knight sees damsel in distress", it is very well done. In this story, it turns out that this so-called damsel is actually a sorceress and the creatures the knight was continuously fighting, were warriors who had previously tried to save her, and over whom she had cast enchantments. In CREEPY #9: This issue featured a great story by Archie Goodwin and Gray Morrow called "Dark Domain". It is a tale of a warrior named Argos who is captured as a slave, seemingly. He escapes and is lost in a weird land he discovers to be Hades! He battles various winged creatures, spirits, etc. Finally, as Argos attempts to escape, Hades tries to pull him back with a fiery hand, but Argos wins and makes it back to his home. When two men from his homeland find him, they discover a strange wound on his back. The wound is a huge skeleton-like hand print, a hand print left by Hades himself!

Out of all the S&S tales Warren published, the ones by Steve Ditko have always been my favorites. Two that come to mind are "Where Sorcery Lives" in CREEPY #14 and "Warrior Of Death" in EERIE #10. In "Where Sorcery Lives", a warrior called Garth, in search for a girl named Tanya, must find Salamand, an evil sorcerer who is holding her captive. Throughout the story, Garth fights insect-like and various winged creatures until finally he finds Salamand and Tanya. During the battle the wizard's hold on Tanya weakens and she comes up behind the wizard and stabs him in the back, destroying him. In EERIE #10, "Warrior Of Death", concerns a mighty warrior who makes a bargain with death. Zahran, who is mortally wounded, faces death himself, but before he dies he hopes to bargain with him. "I am a warrior, I lived only to kill...what could serve you better?", says Zahran. "Guaranteed life, unhampered by fear of death, think of the bounty in souls my sword could send you!". For the time being this deal sounds good so Death makes Zahran an immortal. But as time goes on, Zahran becomes more feared than Death himself and so Death allows Zahran to die. These two stories are very well done, and are S&S classics! Warren has done numerous other S&S tales, but I have named only a few in order to get my point across.

Came 1969 and Marvel had still left Sword & Sorcery largely untouched in their formats of their books. It's surprising that Marvel waited so long to expand the S&S type story beyond the pages of Thor. Since THOR was the only book of it's kind then, fans loved it and were left craving for more.

D.C. comics, though, were even less experimentative along the lines of S&S. The only S&S characters they've had to any degree on a regular basis were the Shining Knight and, as mentioned before, Viking Prince. Joe Kubert's Viking Prince (which in my opinion is better artwise than his more recent efforts on Tarzan) appeared in BRAVE & BOLD and was sparsely reprinted in STAR SPANGLED WAR STORIES a couple years ago (1970 to be exact) and last year an entire 25¢ giant featured Viking Prince reprints, although a couple of the pages were for some reason redrawn by Kubert for this special volume.

Frazetta's Shining Knight appeared in ADVENTURE in the early fifties and was rather light S&S at best as the Shining Knight had a magic sword and a winged steed and survived to modern times from the days of King Arthur by being frozen in an ice berg for 1,500 years. With the magic sword and the winged horse, he's more than just a little similar to Marvel's Black Knight, even though the Black Knight supposedly no longer has his enchanted sword. The Shining Knight and Viking Prince, though, are two very good strips and DC has added fuel to the fires of sword and sorcery just by bringing them back in reprint form every now and then.

Finally though, Marvel began to wise up and started to do some juicy S&S yarns of their own. For example, in AVENGERS #'s 75 and 76, they featured a barbarian-type character called Arkon and both issues featured some glittering sword and sorcery landscape, in the finest tradition, of Buscema and Palmer. When they saw that S&S was beginning to gain popularity, they brought back Arkon in AVENGERS #84, which was a big S&S issue, But even before that they had introduced the sword aspect to the sorcery already present in Dr. Strange by guest starring the Black Knight in issue 178. The story in this issue continued into AVENGERS #61 in which Dr. Strange and the Black Knight co-starred, and such an extravaganza that story was with all of them battling Ymir, the frost giant and Surtur, the fire deamon! Sword and sorcery par excellance.

Toward the end of 1970, Wally Wood tried his hand at S&S and besides doing a few very nice strips for Warren, he bestowed his talents on the colorful pages of Marvel! Two very good examples of the stories that Wood both wrote and drew for Marvel are "Sanctuary" in TOWER OF SHADOWS #8 and "Of Swords And Sorcery" in TOWER OF SHADOWS #7. These stories are pure S&S! There are lizard people, wizards, flying sorcerers, chicks, giant insects, winged demons, mindless hordes of death, etc. You name it, they had it. Also, the cover of TOWER OF SHADOWS #8 is a S&S scene by the great Berni Wrightson!

FASTER, ARAGORN! FASTER, MY VALIANT STEED!
WITH EACH MOMENT, THE FIRES WITHIN MY BREAST RAGE MORE FIERCELY...BECOME HARDER TO CONTROL!
A NIGHTMARE LANDSCAPE...A STRANGE AND TERRIBLE WORLD...AND, WINGING HIS WAY HIGH ABOVE ITS SHADOWS ON A SPECTRAL MOUNT, THE BLACK KNIGHT...AVENGER, ADVENTURER, AND A SOUL IN GRIEVOUS TORMENT...!

The character at left is Arkon, a Conan type that appeared in Marvel even before their Conan did. The remaining art on this page is by Wally Wood from his story "Of Swords And Sorcery" in TOWER OF SHADOWS #7.

THE DREADED MAGIC FORCE LASHES OUT AT THEM... AND THEN THE INCREDIBLE HAPPENS...!
COME, VILLAIN! ...DO YOUR WORST!
IS HE SO STUPID...OR...?
WHAT IF HE'S NOT...

Finally, in the same year as Wood's beautiful S&S work for Marvel, their Conan comic was brought forth into the world. Even though the first issue didn't have the best art or coloring, it was a smash nonetheless. One point in favor of the first issue though was its cover which was really an excellent job. When issue two came out, the success of it was even greater. This was largely due to the craving of the market for comic book S&S and for Conan in particular. Conan's popularity had been skyrocketing ever since the Lancer reprints began in 1966. For three years following the start and the success of the Conan reprints, the paperback market was virtually flooded with S&S novels, most of which being Conan imitations. Robert E. Howard's creation once more took the market by storm, just as it had the readers of WEIRD TALES over thirty years before. The Lancer reprints, though, had not been the first time that the Cimmerian had tried for a comeback. About 1950, Gnome press issued all the published Conan stories in a series of hardcovers which, although attractively prodiced, bombed out. In 1953, Ace books reprinted "Conan The Conqueror" in an Ace double with Leigh Brackett's "The Sword Of Rhiannon" (Ace D-36, now long out of print). These stories were reprinted from the Gnome Press editions and met with the same dead enthusiasm. Ace's "Conan The Conqueror failed so badly that they completely abondoned any further plans for S&S reprints. Part of the reason for Ace's failure though could be attributed to their very poor cover on the book, one which pictured, of all things, a mundane Roman warrior! Poor, poor Conan, you have seen better days.

Another reason for the success of the Conan comic, was the titanically talented artwork of Barry Smith which just captured Conan so well! There were quite a few people, though, who met the news of Smith doing Conan with a great many reservations. It is good to note that many of these same people have since come over and agreed that Barry Smith is the only artist who can do Conan.

It's interesting to note that Marvel and DC were both vying for the rights to Conan at the same time. But as we all know it was Marvel who made the better offer to Glenn Lord and so got Conan. When DC discovered that Marvel had secured the rights to Conan, they pronounced that it would be a failure. Were they ever wrong!

DC's persuit of the S&S theme in their books has run hot and cold since 1969 when they first began using the Conan type. It must be pointed out here that it was DC who persued this type of S&S in comics after Warren publications had. Marvel didn't start using this type of S&S until after DC had sort of broken the ground in the color comics. DC's first S&S story in this vein was "Comes A Warrior" in HOUSE OF MYSTERY #180 which was very well drawn by Gil Kane and Wally Wood. With that team it couldn't help but be good! They followed it up within a month with "...And In A Far-Off Land!" in THE WITCHING HOUR #3. This time it was even better and it was beautifully drawn by Berni Wrightson! But DC's enthusiasm in S&S seemed to wane quickly as only a couple more followed. One was another nice Kane & Wood strip and in HOUSE OF SECRETS #85 "Second Choice", a great S&S strip by Gil Kane and Neal Adams. But this was virtually all we were to see of S&S at DC, great as it was.

Apparently though, DC's somewhat flagging interest in S&S has been renewed. Even though nothing has happened with the theme there lately, they have purchased the rights to Fritz Leiber's Gray Mouser & Fafrd and it is to appear in the near future. Supposedly, talented newcomer Howard Chaykin will be drawing it. I have my doubts as to whether it will be anywhere near as impressive as Conan or King Kull. But only time will tell.

I was just thinking, it's really too bad that Steranko left Marvel right before they started getting into S&S. Could you imagine Conan or King Kull by Steranko?!

But even without Steranko, I have a feeling that sword & sorcery is going to be around in comics for a long time to come. Hell, with people like Smith and Severin drawing, it'd darn well better be.

...AND THEY DESCEND INTO THE VALLEY ON THE OTHER SIDE...INTO THE UNKNOWN...
LOOK! THERE ARE STATUES ALL OVER...WHY WOULD ANYONE MAKE ALL THESE STATUES...
...AND LEAVE THEM IN THIS FOREST? I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

CAPTAIN AMERICA
FEATURED IN
U.S.A.
10¢
NO. 6
COMICS
DECEMBER

THE COMIC REVIEW

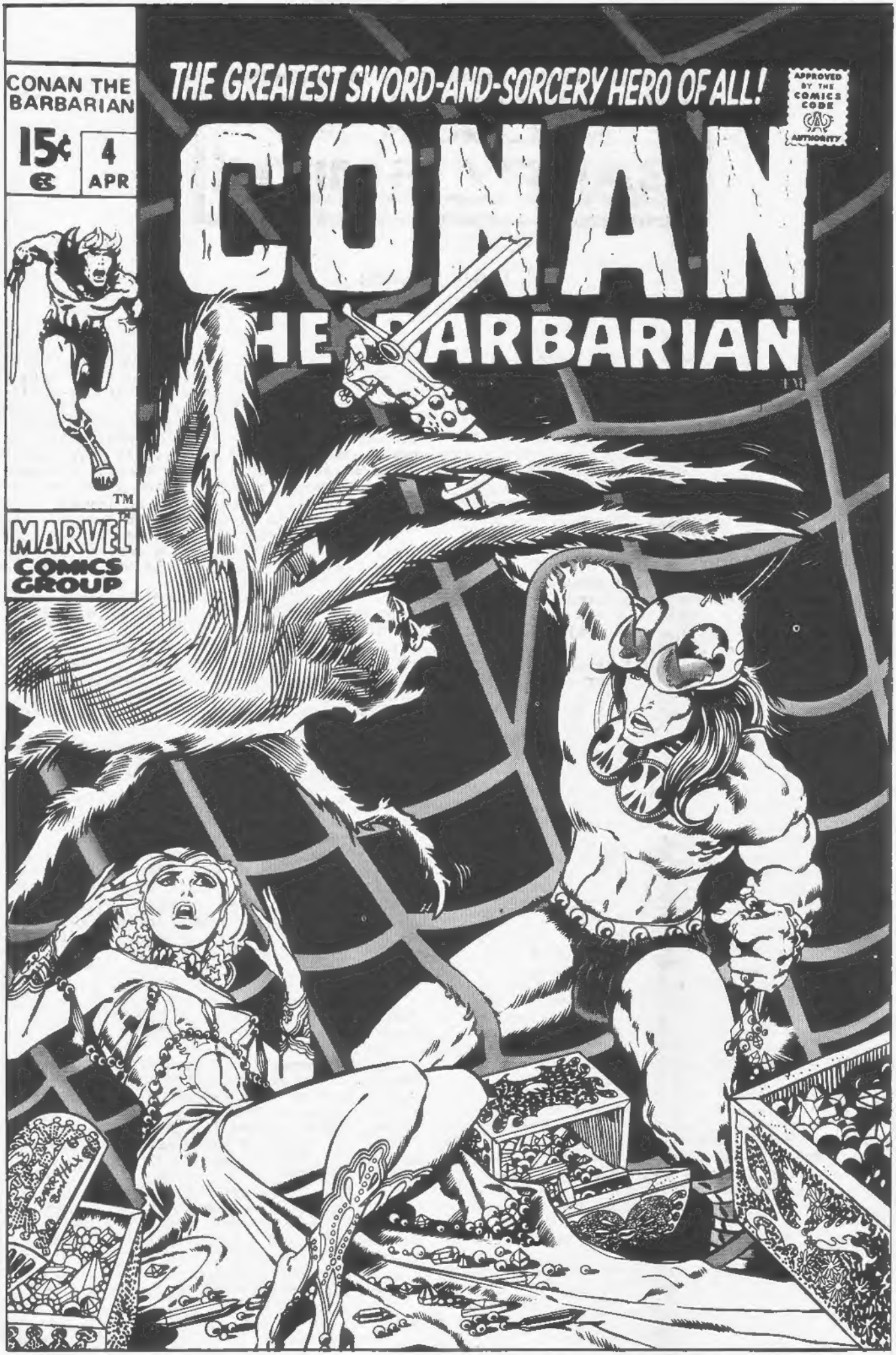
by JAMES VAN HISE

"WHILE THE WORLD SPINS MAD...DR. STRANGE RETURNS!"

MARVEL PREMIERE #3 presented us with the long awaited return of the master of the mystic arts, Dr. Strange. Even though Dr. Strange technically returned in The Defenders, his handling was less than competant and beneath any type of consideration whatsoever. Ross Andru and Don Heck indeed! Here though, in MP, we are presented with the team of Stan Lee and Barry Smith, and to make sure we're aware of that their names are emblazoned on the cover, something I don't recall seeing Marvel do very often, commercial as their covers are. Speaking of the cover, one might hesitate to pick the book up because of it for even though it is drawn by Smith, he did not ink it as whoever did did a very uninspired job. Plus, since Marvel is going through this cycle again, Dr. Strange has a nonsensical word balloon unnecessarily sprouting from his head. The insides though are a different story. The Barry Smith art is actually good. I haven't cared at all for anything that Smith has drawn in the past eight months (with the exception of the poorly reproduced story intended for SAVAGE TALES in CONAN #12) but I can honestly say that I liked his art on Dr. Strange. My actual feelings on the issue fall somewhere between the opinions two friends of mine voiced on it. One of them thought it was tremendous and "really fine". The other thought it was typically bad Smith and that Dr. Strange looked like "Conan with a moustache". Some of the art is quite fine but this is largely due to the excellent inking by Dan Adkins as I cannot bring myself to refer to Barry Smith as a "fine" artist. Most of the art I found enjoyable and felt that it communicated the intended atmosphere quite well. My major disappointments were in many of the faces which were just too much typically Smith and also with the unclothed portions of the characters in the story. Smith's people, when they are wearing clothes, are all right, but any bare portion tends to come across less than successfully as his anatomy is rather strange, tending to be stiff and wrongly proportioned. An example of a really bad Smith face in this story is uncomfortably presented as early as page two, panel five. The forehead of Dr. Strange goes up so high that he looks almost bald, and the lips are so oversized that the dimensions of the entire face come off badly. And yet one can contrast this to panel two of page sixteen which has a very <u>good</u> face, most effective, although I can detect Adkins' hand on that face to quite a large degree. Most of my disagreements with the faces Barry Smith draws is his propensity toward perpetually open mouths. Nine out of ten of the faces he draws have gaping mouths. He does it so much that I <u>always</u> notice it and it <u>always</u> gets on my nerves. Another award winning Smith face is on page nine, panel four, and is so bad it's incredibly humorous! But to contrast again, the three panels at the bottom of that page are very well handled and I really can't find anything in them to complain about as they are enjoyable, especially the last panel. So despite the reservations I had when I first heard that Smith was going to do Dr. Strange, and despite the reservations I still have, I think he did a good job nonetheless.

One the other hand there is the story. Even though Stan Lee has not been turning out his best work for Marvel in recent months, I enjoyed his story on this very much as it captured the mood perfectly and really fun to read as it communicated a weird feeling throughout, especially in the nightmare world. My only exception with the way Dr. Strange was handled was that he didn't have his mask. I felt that when Dr. Strange wore that weird mask he generated more atmosphere into that strip than it ever possessed before, even when Steve Ditko was drawing him into his imaginatively bizarre dimensions. This is one of the reasons I prefer the Colon & Palmer Dr. Strange above any that has been attempted. Steve Ditko's Dr. Strange was great, but Colon & Palmer's was tremendous, the mask adding the right touch to the character and the art was better than any that the two had ever done before or since. I still think that in Dr. Strange that pair of talented artists turned out art of a quality seldom equalled in the entire history of the comic strip. It was imagination unlimited.

So even though I'm pleased with the Lee & Smith Dr. Strange, I'd much rather reread my Colon&Palmer "classics" of the series, and wait for them to do it right again.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A LOOK AT BARRY SMITH

by LARRY BIGMAN

A few years ago, from out of that infinitely deep chasm full of aspiring young artists, Marvel chose a young Britisher, by the name of Barry Smith to illustrate an issue of X-MEN, #54 to be exact. Outside of it being an awkward imitation of Kirby, not much can be said for it. A month later he appeared on the scene again, this time in NICK FURY AGENT OF SHIELD #12. By this time, Jim Steranko, who had done some beautiful work on this strip, had essentially left Marvel, and he had been followed on the strip by Frank Springer. Springer's work left something to be desired, so this young artist, Barry Smith, did the pencilling and some of the inking, on SHIELD #12. If any of you readers remember this issue, you will also remember the poorly rendered Kirby-Steranko inspired job that Smith did. There was a lapse of a few months before any of Smith's art appeared again, and when it did,it was this time in AVENGERS. There was a slight improvement over his first job, but nothing spectacular. After going through Daredevil, Ka-Zar and a few horror strips, Smith finally settled (more or less) into being the artist on Marvel's adaptation of R.E. Howard's sword-and-sorcery character, Conan. It is at this time that Smith definitely began to be noticed.

Barry Smith was an unknown. He came out of nowhere and did an issue of X-MEN. He then did one issue of a Marvel comic that, a few months before, had probably been that company's best written and illustrated title. To put it mildly, I thought SHIELD #12 was lousy. I thought, and still think, it is an example of extremely amateurish art. Barry Smith, to me, was an example of a true hack artist; I could see no redeeming factors in Smith's favor. I can remember being slightly impressed by a rendering of a fish-eye's view of a scene, but nothing else impressed me. Nick Fury looked like a prematurely gray teenager. I definitely thought Martin Goodman and Stan Lee had lost their corporate minds. To be truly fair though, one must put some of the blame for the appearance of SHIELD #12 on the inkers, one of whom was Sid Greene, known, prior to that time, to be competent in his job. The only thing is the other inker was Smith himself but then we don't know how much of it he actually inked. The appearance of this issue was that of an unfinished product; the pencils just did not seem to be inked. This could have been due to poor reproduction. Having never seen any originals from this issue, I cannot be sure whom to put the blame on. But let's be fair and say it was not Smith. This was one of his first jobs and he did deserve to get the benefit of the doubt.

DAREDEVIL was the next comic that Smith did for any length of time. When I saw this, I was convinced that SHIELD #12 was Barry Smith's fault. I simply could not get over the incredibly strange anatomy and body positions that Smith employed in his renderings; they were impossible situations. Smith was still too, too loose. His sense of layout design was definitely faulty. A competent artist doing layouts for him (as Kirby did for Steranko in the first few Steranko-Shield stories in STRANGE TALES) would have vastly improved the overall effect of Smith's work. Smith seemed to have assimilated certain aspects of Kirby's and Steranko's styles without really concentrating on layout or panel design. Smith's layout at this time was insanely frenetic; there seemed to be no plan in order to make the panels flow in a smooth fashion. This defect in Smith's art is still to be found in his current art at times.

Suffice it to say, the Smith issues of AVENGERS and X-MEN were not as good as his jobs done on DAREDEVIL. I do think, though, that Smith found a chance to experiment in detail work while doing both of these former titles. It is important to note this because of its later effect on CONAN. This is certainly speculation, although whether it is idle or not is a moot point.

The next step in Smith's career at Marvel is the series of "horror" stories done for both TOWER OF SHADOWS and CHAMBER OF DARKNESS. In some ways, these stories are actually better than Smith's current work on CONAN. I say this because on CONAN, Smith has picked up little idiosyncracies that particularly annoy. The two main ones are incredibly wide lower lips and incredibly narrow noses. Combine these and the result is a freakish face. Compare some of Smith's faces in "The Scream Of Things" in TOWER OF SHADOWS #7 and the same in <u>any</u> issue of CONAN (albeit, it has become more acute in later issues). One can easily see that the former is preferable. This is not to say that the "horror stories" are overall better stories. They are not. There is still an awkwardness in anatomy and layout, perhaps even more accentuated than Smith's earlier works. This may be due to his trying to find a style of his own.

In the summer of 1970, CONAN #1 appeared on the stands. From its inception, CONAN sold fantastically. Perhaps this was due to Conan's not being a super-hero, or perhaps to Smith's art, or even, perhaps, that Howard freaks were impressed in Roy Thomas' handling of the character. Who can definitely say? Smith's art in #1 was relatively uninspired. There were traces of his detail work coming into play, but basically it was not very different from the "horror" stories. There were traces of those aforementioned idiosyncrasies sneaking in, but not to any large degree. #2 was an example of a pure blending of his old style and his new, detailed style. Some of the awkwardness was being worked out of the limbs and panel lay-

outs, but the lips were getting bigger and the noses smaller. The splash page to "Lair Of The Beast-Men!" was particularly striking. CONAN #3 was 90% new style and 10% old. It was a vast improvement over #1 in four months time. #4 is pure new style, despite the awkwardness in anatomy that still exists up to the present.

Perhaps my biggest gripe with Barry Smith's work is his strange anatomy. Legs twist in impossible directions, arms meet shoulders almost at the middle of the back, mouths drop or hang open six inches. It tends to get on one's nerves after awhile. Along with this gripe is the fact that he seems to be doing nothing to correct it. Smith's technique to keep one from noticing this problem is to throw in superfluous detail or Peter Maxish pages. An example of the former is CONAN #8 ("The Keepers Of The Crypt") with its incredibly complex and, at times, undecipherable (due to excess detail) panels of the treasure room. A superb example of the latter is page 19 of CONAN #15 ("The Green Empress Of Melnibone'"). This full page is an example of plastic padding, serving no other purpose than to impress the impressionable.

To Smith's advantage is the fact that he introduced nipples on the chest of men in CONAN #6. What a breakthrough! We have yet to see Conan's navel, though.

Despite my personal dislkie of many of Barry Smith's techniques, I do have my favorite story by him. That story is "The Boy Who Loved Trees!" in VAMPIRELLA #9. Besides the story by Smith being rather intriguing, except for the ending, there is a certain magic in this work. I know that Smith's awkwardness exists here, too, but at least the noses and lips aren't too bad. This is one of Smith's few stories that he himself inked, and it shows that he is probably a better inker than penciller. There are some very nice panels that are not cluttered with his characteristic detail. To counter my above statement, all one has to do is look at Smith's inking of "The Sword and the Sorcerers!" in CONAN #16. I do believe that in certain panels he was definitely trying to emulate Neal Adams and, at times, it did not work. Another pet peeve of mine concerning Smith can be found on page 3, panel 3 of this story: his cyrstalline emotion lines. These are also ludicrous. But back to "The Boy Who Loved Trees!" I definitely think that Smith should develope from this point, because, other than the awkward anatomy, the background and secondary work is perfect. This should be an example of Smith's potential.

Barry Smith needs to work on one thing: anatomy. If he masters that, he is capable of doing superb comic book art. If he doesn't, I really think he should be forgotten. A large volume of detail does not make an artist, and so Barry Smith cannot be numbered among great comic book artists. Perhaps one day, but don't be too sure of it.

THE LAND OF ALWAYS-LIGHT... THE CIMMERIAN'S PIERCING EYES ARE CLOSED-- HIS EARS UNHEARING --AS HE IS BORNE BODILY THRU NIGHT-DARK TUNNELS...
...INTO A VAST, ILLUMINED CAVERN...
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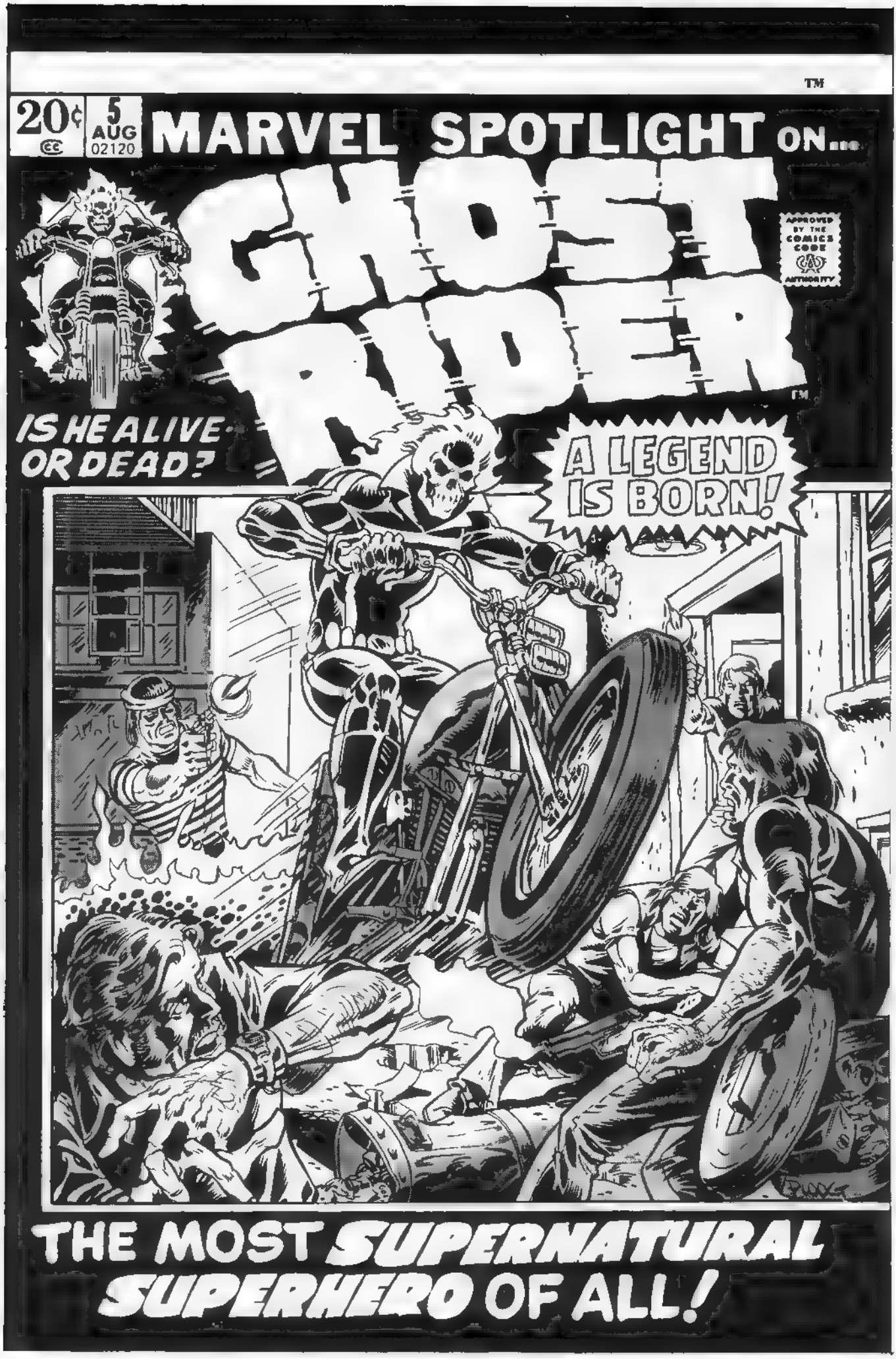
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IS HE ALIVE OR DEAD?
A LEGEND IS BORN!
THE MOST SUPERNATURAL SUPERHERO OF ALL!

THE LONE RANGER

A LA MARVEL

by JACK REID

Recently, it was learned that Marvel comics had been negotiating for the rights to the Lone Ranger as a new addition to their line-up of western comics. Sadly, this did not come about as I know that the greatest western hero of all would have risen to even greater heights under the Marvel banner.

Through undisclosed sources I learned what the masked rider of the plains and his Indian companion might have been like had Marvel indeed secured them in their peerless ranks.

Unlike the rather bland and almost semi-animated version which trudged uncertainly amid the saturday morning cartoon fair a few years ago, the Marvel masked man would have been handled with care and grace. Only the finest western comics artists available would have been allowed to touch him. Their appearence would have been patterned after the much heralded team of Clayton Moore and Jay Silverheels as they <u>are</u> the Lone Ranger and Tonto more than any other actors that ever portrayed them, and I daresay, that ever will. In this case it is the Lone Ranger and Tonto who are typecast after these two fine actors that portrayed them.

Typical of Marvel, the plots would have been above standard western fare, with Tonto adopting a much more meaningful role, battling the oppression of his red brothers. The following is an example of what the Lone Ranger might have been like under Marvel. I don't have access to all of the fine scriptwork so I'll sometimes be putting in parentheses the synopsis of the detail work I don't have.

"SPAWN OF THE HILLS"

The dark azure sky creamed and glowed with the coming of dawn, starkly silhouetting the two mounted figures against the desert landscape. They stood alone at the crest of a sandy hill overlooking a small town, and conversed in serious tones while their horses nibbled at the sparse grass at their feet. One would be hardpressed to find a pair more strangely contrasted than these two men. One was a white man, dressed in snug fitting light blue, wearing a hat as pale as the sand and riding a horse as wild and white as the driven snow, a bridled fury descended from a line of thunderous chargers. His companion sat proud and erect in the saddle, a young man like the other but dressed in buckskin, a leather thong around his head holding back a great shock of dark brown hair. The horse he rode was a trim paint. Even more unlike his companion was the fact that this man was an Indian, a full blooded descendent of the ancestors of the american prairie. There was yet one other thing which seemed to set these two apart even more certainly than anything else. The white man's upper face was masked.

Wild was this time in history and many were those who had died at the hands of the lawless breed who thrived in the open territory of the old west. Many of this selfsame breed had felt the sting of the bullets from the swift guns these two men wore, and had been brought to justice by them as well. Some of this outlaw breed had resisted murderously and the justice they reaped was eternal. Nowhere in the pages of history can one find a greater champion of justice than this masked avenger who is known only as...the Lone Ranger!

Nudging their horses they started down the hill, their passage kicking up a billowing wake of sand.

(The Lone Ranger secures himself just outside of town while Tonto enters to reconnoiter. Tonto leaves his guns with the Ranger due to the bad feelings the townspeople have against Indians. At this time the reason happens to be due to some brutal murders, all of women, which have taken place. The only clues were the tracks of an apparently enormous bare-footed man, and that in the hand of one of the victims was found clutched a scrap of Indian embroidery. So at present the town is seething, and not very far below the surface either. While walking through the streets, Tonto tries to act casual and ignores the penetrating glances of the townspeople. He visits the sheriff, the man who had summoned them, but the meeting is unfruitful as the sheriff is disturbed that the Lone Ranger sent Tonto in ahead and has not come himself. He acknowledges Tonto's aid but does not hide his disappointment. Shortly after leaving the sheriff, a woman in a shawl furtively gets Tonto's attention and draws him into an alley and then into the back door of a house. To Tonto's stunned recognition she reveal's herself to be a girl named Laura whom Tonto had known years before as she had once loved this proud, taciturn brave. Tonto recalls to himself the story of this and how Laura's parents had been shocked at this revelation and had thereby forbidden it. To try and ease her pain, Tonto had denied that he loved her, although he knew that it wasn't the truth. The years had dimmed his memory of her mercifully as she had disappeared with her family a year before Tonto had stumbled on the pass in which six Texas rangers had been massacred and one lay badly wounded, and his career with the Lone Ranger had begun. Tonto and Laura talked of many things although he dared not reveal what he still felt for her, for although he could stand the barbs of prejudice, he knew that it could, and would, ultimately crush her. He reveals his mission and the girl tells in fearful whispers of a giant she has seen in the hills, a creature which appears to be only partly a human. She had noted that the direction from which it had come was the region of the hills which the Indians refuse to enter due to some superstitious dread. Tonto thanks her and leaving through the alley he makes his way to the Indian village. He is accepted and even recognized by some as the friend of "kimo sabee". When he questions them on the forbidden region of the hills they are reluctant to say anything. It is only from one of the village Old Ones that he is told that in those hills dwells the son of the witch woman and the devil.)

Tonto knew that he was on to something now. Old Jahho had remembered well what lived in the hills even if most of the younger braves refused to believe him. Yet they avoided that ground with the same fear as Jahho, but refused to believe it was the reason he gave, saying that it was sacred to the Moon. Only the old remembered what the young refused to believe.

The Lone Ranger must be told! The quickest way to the other end of town was through it, much as he dreaded further contact with the ignorant townspeople. His air was casual but his pace was swift down the streets which were now thinning toward dusk. As he passed the sheriff's office he noted with some concern that the sheriff's horse was gone. Tonto cursed at his bad luck as he had planned to try and borrow that horse as he had led his own behind the buildings and sent it back to the Ranger as the prearranged signal that he had seen the sheriff and let him know they had come. He hoped that the murderer had not struck again, but no, it wasn't dark yet and he was sure he knew...a scream!

He whirled and raced toward the source, the hardware store, shades pulled down and lights burning inside. He halted only momentarily to glance through a crack in the shade, and then his full weight was thrown against the door so that it burst from its hinges and crashed to the floor. In a second he saw Laura in the grip of a hardfaced man in breeches and near them a grizzled gunslinger... who was going for his gun! But even as Tonto had crashed through the door, he had whipped his knife out of its sheath in his sleeve and that knife now sped from his fingers and cut a glistening arc through the air to be buried in the gunslinger's shoulder. As the man holding Laura turned, he released his grip on her and went for his gun. Tonto leaped, pivoted and kicked out with his right foot, bringing it crashing into the man's face, snapping his head back and sending him sprawling into a display of hats. Before the man could recover, Tonto snatched a gun from the wounded man's holster and pointed it menacingly from one to the other.

"Laura, what happened to you?"

"Tonto, Bart saw me lead you into the alley and he threatened to kill me if I didn't tell him why I was talking to an Indian."

"Go home Laura. I wait for sheriff and we take care of these." He gestured meaningfully toward the two sullen looking men.

Laura glanced at them fearfully and then ran quickly out the door.

"Now," said Tonto, "we wait and see how you explain to sheriff why you were threatening woman. That not look good with other happenings in town."

"No redskin, I guess it wouldn't!" said a rough voice from behind him!

Tonto stiffened at the menace but made no resistance when his gun was taken. There were six of them, Tonto saw, as they pushed him aside and entered the store. Tonto realised there was no time to waste as he exploded into action. His fists crashed into one and then another as they fought to subdue him, not daring to use their guns in such close quarters. He ducked and swerved, absorbing blows and throwing vicious punches at any exposed face or throat. A fist crashed into his face and his vision blurred while there was a taste of blood in his mouth. He kicked out at his attackers and a responding cry showed that he was lucky. But his luck couldn't last, nor did it. He went down under a rain of pummelling blows and after an instant of blackness he was looking up into Bart's grinning face. Tonto's head was forced back by Bart's fisthold on his hair as he felt himself being led down the street. Suddenly his eyes were assailed by the bright lights of the saloon as he was pushed through the door and thrown to the hard wood floor.

"This redskin," Bart began, "has been causing trouble...not to mention harrasing women!"

Tonto tried to protest but a fist slammed into his stomach and he slumped over gasping, his breath hissing between clenched teeth. The room grew quiet and Tonto felt himself being lifted again while his arms were tied quickly behind him. A rope was thrown over a rafter and he was lifted and stood on a table. He was examining his chances when he felt the rough scrape of a rope slipped over his head and tightened around his neck. He started to sag weakly but the rope bit into him, burning his flesh and choking off his breath so that he had to force himself to stand even though the effort caused a wave of dizziness to sweep over him.

"Now injun, we're gonna ask you a few questions and if you don't say what we want to hear we'll just give the rope a bit of a pull until you do." The man yanked the rope once for emphasis. "Now, what were you doin' talkin' to that white woman? You were gone in that alley an awful long time, now what could you a' been doin' eh?"

The room resounded with coarse laughter at the man's inference and Tonto felt the rope tighten with an excrutiating jerk in response to his silence.

Tonto had kept his fists pulled a little way apart when they were binding him and as the man talked on, exchanging a few words with Bart, Tonto worked at his bonds and loosened them. His hands were suddenly free and he went for his knife to cut the rope above him, but the knife was gone, he had used it! The rope was suddenly biting into his neck as he clawed at it and felt himself raised off the ground, dangling above the barroom floor. His vision spun, started going black when he suddenly felt himself falling, the distant echo of a gunshot impressing its meaning on his fluttering consciousness.

A reckless attack by Tonto, though, causes the big-foot to release its prisoner and leap for him. Tonto barely escapes its clutches by firing at it at point blank range. The resulting flash of powder temporarily blinds the creature and singes its face. The Lone Ranger rides swiftly toward the girl and snatches her to safety. They then bolt their horses from the seen, speeding off toward the direction of town. Although they make good their escape, the big-foot is in hot persuit, its massive bulk being able to run at an incredible speed. Upon nearing the town, the three come upon a large group of armed men who have overpowered and bound what can only be the woman's son. Even though bound, the man's kinship is frighteningly overpowering, his animalism bristling from beneath his quasi-human veil. His height is a solid eight feet and much of his body is covered with long black hair. His features, although human, have an ape-like cast to them. The one other human characteristic which cannot be determined from his roughly clothed physical form, is that he possessed a human mind!)

Some of the men recognized Tonto as they rode up and began moving toward him. In the dim light the Lone Ranger's mask went unnoticed.

With the impending realization of the thing which persued them, the Ranger and Tonto knew what had to be done. Almost as one, their guns flashed into their hands as they moved toward the mob.

"You're making a mistake," shouted the masked man, "this isn't the murderer. In fact I just saved this girl from the real killer and he's following us now."

"No," Someone shouted, "this has to be him. Look at his size and he's wearing Indian clothes."

"It wasn't an Indian," Tonto injected, "that killed women. Scrap of cloth come from what killer carry after he attack hut in hills."

"You must release that man!" yelled the Ranger over the disquieting voices the men were raising, "He's the only one who has the strength..."

His sentence was shattered by a roar and a crash of brush behind them as the big-foot came into sight. All of the disquieting unhuman characteristics of the man bound on the ground were magnified to the point of hideousness in the monster that toweringly confronted them. It was nearly a foot taller and a hundred pounds heavier and all of it was thickly corded muscle.

Some of the men opened fire and others fled screaming.

The Lone Ranger leaped from his horse and gave Silver a slap to carry the girl to safety. Tonto loosened his rope and made a noose of one end as he began to ride toward the thing. As Tonto's rope whipped out and over the creature's head, a futile move that he knew could only delay at best, the masked man ran to the bound and helpless half-breed on the ground. The Ranger was moving to quickly cut his ropes when the captive warned him off.

"Get away from here," he commanded in a deep, rumbling voice, "you've given me the break I've needed by getting the guns off me. I can do the rest!"

With that he rolled to his knees and one by one the hard ropes that bound him snapped and split like rotten twine until with a final shrug he had thrown them all off.

The Lone Ranger was positive now that his hunch had been right as he ran from the freed man's side and whistled to Tonto. The man was intelligent and quick, moreso perhaps than any of the "normal" men who had captured him.

Tonto had already seen him and released his rope at the whistle. Turning Scout away from the big-foot, he sped in the opposite direction, slowing only so that the Lone Ranger could leap into the saddle behind him. They halted a short distance away and watched expectantly.

The two titans faced each other only the barest fraction of a second before they clashed with brutal force. Like two tremendously powerful animals they fought, biting and clawing, pounding with sledghammer blows that would have shattered an ordinary being but which only served to increase their beastial fury. The Indian's fist crashed into the big-foot's jaw, and a resounding crack accompanied the monster's wail of pain. Again and again he struck, dodging to left and right to escape the long murderous arms and sinewy fingers of his deadly sire. The big-foot was becoming wilder and wilder now that his adversary was causing him pain. He charged and the Indian ducked quickly, slipped through the creature's grasp, leaped to its back and locked his powerful arms around its neck in a crushing grip. The man-thing threw itself to the ground to loosen the grip but the half-breed hung on, refusing to let go even though blood poured from his nose and through his teeth and his face contorted with effort and pain. Sweat and gore washed down his face until his eyes were half blinded from it, but still his surging strength fought on, twisting his grip inexorably until with a violent shriek and a splintering crack the big-foot lay motionless beneath him.

As the victor rose unsteadily to his feet, Tonto saw that some of the men who had fled were beginning to move back. The Lone Ranger hadn't noted this yet as he was breathing a sigh of relief from where he stood on the ground. Thus he was greatly surprised when, as he turned to Tonto he saw him suddenly spur his horse toward the half-breed. He watched uncertainly as he saw him stop and quickly say something to the towering Indian. He caught the giant's nod of assent and saw him say something in return, casting a repugnant glance in the direction of the town. He realized the signifigance of this when a group of townsmen suddenly appeared on the Ranger's left and right moving toward the defiant half-breed. It was then that with a low, mocking laugh the Indian turned and disappeared into the woods, and the masked man was quite sure that the civilized world would never see him again.

The masked man and his Indian companion were mounting their horses in front of the sheriff's office the next morning when Laura saw them. A group of people had gathered when they saw their sheriff talking with friendly regard to a man who wore a black mask. A few had recognized him as the one who had saved the girl and warned them of the real murderer. A few others who recognized the Indian with him, and who had been in the saloon that night just two days previous, said and did nothing.

As the two riders turned their mounts and began to leave, Laura caught Tonto's eye and saw him wave to her and mouth something only she understood. She felt her throat constrict as she struggled for control. Distantly she heard a voice somewhere behind her question as to who the men were. With a proud and steady voice she replied, "That's the Lone Ranger...and Tonto."

Almost simultaneously on the morning breeze drifted the unmistakable tones of "Hi-yo Silver, awaaaay!"

FINIS

Let us know if you would like to see more untold tales of the Lone Ranger and Tonto.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," a voice drawled, "I find your conduct highly questionable."

At the saloon entrance stood a tall, immaculately dressed man wearing a white hat and a wide grin. A deringer was glistening in his hand and the smoke from it rising in curling wisps in the air above him.

His eyes mocked as he spoke, "This is very poor hospitality you've been displayin'."

He gestured with the gun for the men to move back toward the bar. Tonto had stood up and removed the noose gingerly from his neck and started to shuffle toward the door.

"Hold it!", Bart shouted, "He's only got one bullet left in that deringer and I say we can take 'im!"

In answer the stranger's free hand flashed into his coat and drew a silver, pearl handled revolver before anyone could move. His gaze had now turned cold.

"I wouldn't bet your life on that," he replied, the southern drawl disappearing.

Tonto walked stiffly out of the saloon and climbed on the silver bridled white horse which waited untethered in the street. He heard the doors of the saloon swing quickly open and suddenly the stranger was in the saddle behind him, urging on the great stallion as it thundered into the night.

"That plenty close call, kimo sabee," hissed Tonto, painfully.

(After Tonto's rescue by the disguised Lone Ranger, they return to their camp outside of town where Tonto reveals what he has discovered. The Lone Ranger explains that later in the day he changed into his disguise and entered town after he saw the sheriff riding out, as he was afraid of trouble. The next morning Tonto is well enough to carry on and they both head out towards the forbidden hills. Picking their way through the forest, they find nothing and as night clandestinely falls in the woods, they are still searching for some trace of the creature that dwells there. Suddenly they spot a light, and in the trunk of a massive dead tree they find a hut with an old woman in it.)

The woman was old, incredibly old, and it was apparent from her labored breathing that she was close to death. As the Ranger and Tonto crossed quickly over to her they both noted that someone else apparently lived here with this woman. The woman was Indian, but even with encroaching death, she still displayed the fierce pride of her race. And yet there was in her eyes a haunting fear, a fear of something greater than death.

"You must stop him, " she croaked, "It is the time of the Moon and only death can reign."

(The dying Indian woman reveals that she had been living there with her son. Her son, though, is only half-human, the product of an attack on her by one of the "big-foot" or sasquatch, a half-human people that sparsely populate northwestern america. She had moved to the hills with her son years before as her tribe had cast them out as being possessed of the devil men of the hills, for even then the appearence of her then young son had filled the tribe with superstitious dread. The Lone Ranger and Tonto discover that it wasn't her son that was commiting the murders but rather the same big-foot that had attacked her years before. It had returned and tracked her down, trying to come for her each full moon, but when it is fought off by her son, it withdraws in fury and seeks another, it inexorably heading toward the town. Thereby it satiates its strange moon spawned drives. This night things had not gone as before. The creature had gotten to her and crushed many of her frail bones before her son had been able to drive it off. When her son realized that the thing had dealt her mortal wounds, it had left bent on revenge, his path being toward the town where he knew it would go. She begins to warn them of its deadly, mountainous strength, but before she can say more she dies. Although the masked man and Tonto know the truth, they are uncertain how to convince anyone of it. Their main concern though is the big-foot and they ride in the direction of the town hunting for it. They come upon a shack near town which has been broken into, much of it shattered as if by some tremendous force. The only occupant of it is a young man who, although still alive, is completely insane and his hair has turned completely white. From his babbling they gather that the big-foot has taken the man's daughter. With speed born of fear for the girl and with reckless disregard for themselves they swiftly track the creature down and confront it. Their bullets only slow it down and it is difficult to get a clear shot due to its captive.

MARVEL I.Q.

1) What was Dr. Strange's name changed to by Eternity?

2) In what comic did the real Captain America return?

3) In what issue did Reed Richards and Sue Storm marry?

4) In what comic did the Human Torch have his own strip?
   a) In what number did it begin?

5) What device did the Molecule Man use to focus his powers?

6) In what issue of Fantastic Four did they acquire their costumes?

7) In what issue of Journey Into Mystery did Thor first battle Loki?

8) What issue of Fantastic Four was inked by Steve Ditko?

9) What was the cause of Daredevil's blindness?

10) In which issue of what comic did Dr. Strange first appear?

1) SANDERS 2) AVENGERS #4 3) F.F. ANNUAL #3 4) STRANGE TALES a) 101
5) A WAND 6) ISSUE #3 7) J.I.M. #85 8) #13 9) AN ACCIDENT WITH RADIOACTIVE
MATERIAL 10) STRANGE TALES #110

MARVEL VS D.C.

KA-ZAR

by JASON LEEDS

This is the first of a series where we will compare similar characters or titles published by Marvel and DC. Ka-Zar as opposed to Tarzan is our topic this time around. Taking the side of Ka-Zar means I have to battle a legendary character drawn by one of comicdom's most respected artists.

To simplify matters, I will discuss Ka-Zar as he appeared in the first twelve issues of ASTONISHING TALES and Tarzan as he has appeared in his first three issues. It is my opinion that in the comic book medium the art is much more important than the story plot, after the character has been established. Mind you, a good story is desirable, but it still must take second place to art. It is in this area that I feel Ka-Zar far outshines Tarzan. Even though I was not overly impressed by Kirby in AT number one and two, it was still more dynamic and forceful than Kubert on Tarzan. Barry Smith took over with number three and improved issue by issue and hit a high point with number six. Buscema handled the penciling chores on number nine and did a masterful job. Issues ten and twelve were handled by Smith and Buscema, respectively, and although the art during this period deteriorated (but only slightly) it still outshines any of Kubert's Tarzan. Gil Kane, in ASTONISHING TALES number eleven, turned out a fine job but unfortunately, one cannot always count on Kane to turn in a top notch effort. With the right inker, I believe that Buscema could be the best and most consistant of artists to handle Ka-Zar.

Kubert on Tarzan failed to live up to expectations. Most fans expected it to be up to his TOR work, but it was not to be. In fact, in my opinion, it's some of the worst art Joe has done in years. The art is so loose and sloppy that it comes off looking more like Frank Thorne (who, ironically, is a Kubert imitator). There can be no doubt that Kubert has the ability, but so far his pencils look more like hen scratchings.

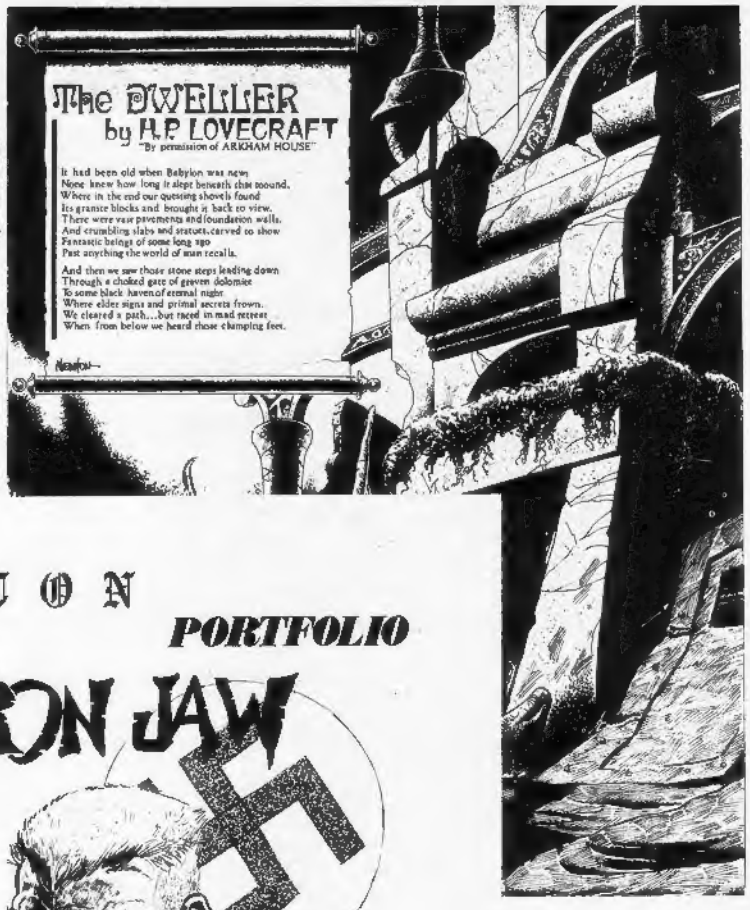
Ka-Zar vs Tarzan--no contest. Marvel wins it hands down.

TARZAN

by JAMES VAN HISE

Although both Tarzan and Ka-Zar have been through many hands, this discussion is concerned only their most recent appearences in their own strips in DC and Marvel.

I feel that art wise, Tarzan is easily the best as each issue that Kubert has done so far has surpassed the one before so that Tarzan has gone from good to great and to one of the best comics published today. Can the same be said for Ka-Zar? Hardly. It's first two issues started out with very good Kirby but number three through six only had partially successful Barry Smith. This is beacuse Smith would draw one panel which is really good and right next to it draw one which is incredibly rancid. His art ran hot and cold through the four issues he did, ranging from bad in number three to great in number four to a combination of both in five and six. In seven and eight the art is by Herb Trimpe and I'd just rather not mention that at all. In number nine the art is very good, being by John Buscema and is just thoroughly enjoyable. Number ten has some of the worst Barry Smith I've ever seen while number eleven is contrasted with some very good Gil Kane. The only thing I really have against number eleven is the tasteless word balloon on the cover which has Ka-Zar saying, "Kill Zabu, kill kill!" Brack!! Number twelve was a nice follow up being drawn by John Buscema, incorporating into it the unpublished Neal Adams Man-Thing strip from Savage Tales #2. But even at its best I don't feel that Ka-Zar matched the verve and drive of Tarzan by Kubert. Tarzan captures the feel of the jungle much better than any artist on Ka-Zar ever did. One wonders if Marvel has perhaps realized that their Tarzan imitation cannot stand up to the competition from the original since they have removed the setting from the savage land under the pole to backdrops in civilization. Although they have promised to do this, they may be getting cold feet since in number twelve their civilized setting is the Everglades! Yet even with all that Marvel's Tarzan imitation has done, Kubert's Tarzan is yet doing what Tarzan does best and doing it very well too. Kubert's Tarzan is Tarzan while Marvel's Ka-Zar, with its crazyquilt of artists, is only a pale shadow at best.


The DWELLER
by H.P. LOVECRAFT
"By permission of ARKHAM HOUSE"
It had been old when Babylon was new;
None knew how long it slept beneath that mound.
Where in the end our questing shovels found
Its granite blocks and brought it back to view.
There were vast pavements and foundation walls.
And crumbling slabs and statues carved to show
Fantastic beings of some long ago
Past anything the world of man recalls.
And then we saw those stone steps leading down
Through a choked gate of greven dolomite
To some black haven of eternal night
Where elder signs and primal secrets frown.
We cleared a path...but raced in mad retreat
When from below we heard those clumping feet.
NEWTON

NEWTON PORTFOLIO

IRON JAW

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